

North Chicago VA News



VA Great Lakes
Health Care System
VISN 12

North Chicago
VA Medical Center
3001 Green Bay Road
North Chicago, Illinois 60064

October/November 2004

NewsBits

Congratulations

Congratulations to Bill Flood, Acting Chief, Domiciliary Programs, who on October 3rd was a participant in the Milwaukee Marathon. Bill did not let the cold temperatures or wind stop him from completing the race.

Congratulations

Hershel A. Ryales, Pharmacy Service, along with other veterans from the American Legion Post 21 of Kenosha WI were among over 500 Wisconsin veterans and veterans service organizations that were recognized and honored at the University of Wisconsin vs. Central Florida game on September 4.



Safety Tip

Don't spray aerosols like air freshener near sprinklers or smoke detectors. This can activate the fire alarm system

Congratulations!

Dr. Xanthopoulos, Primary Care, was presented the Veterans of Foreign Wars "Employee of the Year" award by Dick Kutz of the VFW.



North Chicago News

North Chicago News is published for staff and volunteers of the North Chicago VA Medical Center. Submissions can be sent to douglas.house@med.va.gov
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\$13 Million Project To Renovate Surgery & Emergency Room

The Department of Veterans Affairs awarded a contract to Plata/Mota of Chicago, Illinois to renovate our surgery and emergency room. This is part of the joint merger plans between North Chicago VAMC and Naval Hospital Great Lakes (NHGL). The renovation project will begin in early 2005 and will provide four new operating rooms and a substantially expanded emergency room. Completion of the work is targeted for June 2006. Once the work is complete, all of Navy's inpatient medicine, surgery and emergency room services will be shifted to NCVAMC. This will be a milestone since nowhere else in the country is there such a relationship between VA and Navy. This joint venture will mean VA and

Navy personnel will be working together to provide the best quality care to veterans, active duty and their dependents. Navy and VA providers will be working along side each other and for the first time in a VA there will be pediatric care provided for Navy dependents. As the project progresses we will keep everyone informed.

The last phase of the joint merger is the construction of a new ambulatory care center for the Navy, adjacent to NCVAMC. Currently this is still in the planning stage with construction beginning 2007 or 2008.

VISN AACT Team Develops Palliative Care Program

An interdisciplinary team from three facilities in VISN 12 have established an exemplary palliative care program in the VISN.

Marcos Montagnini, a Milwaukee VA physician; Joyce Wadlington, a NCVAMC nurse; Susan Regan, a NCVA social worker; and Father James Burnett, a Hines VAH chaplain worked together as a team in the VISN to develop palliative care. At the recent AACT(Accelerated Administrative and Clinical Training) conference in Nashville. This group was asked to present their accomplishments. "It was an excellent presentation and as a result we will be mentoring the development of other AACT teams that may have been struggling before, but are developing as a result of this program in Nashville." said Joyce.

This is the fulfillment of a vision, that many would have predicted would not

work. The idea of forming VISN AACT Teams and empowering them to develop palliative care in their VISNs was ingenious and took a great deal of courage and energy. Congratulations to this group of people from different disciplines and different facilities who worked well together and produced much this past year.



NCVA Employees Are MORE Satisfied Than Most VA Employees In The VISN and the Nation!

Thank you for participating in the All Employee Survey (AES). This survey was conducted in May 2004 to identify strengths and weaknesses relating to employees' job and organizational satisfaction here at North Chicago VA Medical Center. Because of your participation and dedication to improving our facility and becoming an "Employer of Choice", we have received survey results which we are reviewing and utilizing to develop plans to improve your satisfaction. To summarize the results of the AES, the following information is provided:

In comparison with VHA and VISN 12, North Chicago VA Medical Center did exceptionally well. For the portion relating to Job Satisfaction Index (JSI), we scored above VHA and VISN 12 in the following categories: Quality of Work; Customer Satisfaction; Type of Work; Coworkers; Overall Satisfaction; Direct Supervision; Working Conditions and Amount of Work. For the section relating to Organizational Assessment Inventory (OAI), we scored higher than VHA and VISN 12 on the following: Resources; Safety Climate; Customer Service; Planning/Evaluation; Work/Family Balance; Diversity Acceptance;

Supervisory Support and Coworker Support. The last section of the survey related to culture and we scored higher than both VHA and VISN 12 in all four categories: Bureaucratic; Rational; Group and Entrepreneurial.

As North Chicago VA Medical Center strives to be the employer of choice and continue to deliver the highest quality patient care, it is critical to continually assess employee and organizational satisfaction. When this survey is conducted again in 2005, it is imperative that you participate in the survey. 45% of the staff at North Chicago VA Medical Center participated in the May 2004 survey and we need to hear from everyone.

If you have ideas to help us increase job satisfaction, please let us know by contacting Mary Schindler located in Building 133CA, Room 3D-129A2 at extension 81482 or Sabine Sedall, Building 1, Room 224 at extension 83095.

Please visit the North Chicago VA Medical Center homepage for the complete PowerPoint that was presented during Director's All Employee meeting. Again, thank you for taking part in this survey.



John Manczko Joins NCVAMC



A warm welcome is extended to John Manczko. John recently joined our medical center as the VA/DoD Sharing & Leasing Coordinator.

He was previously employed as a Program Analyst at the Great Lakes Naval Training Center. Recently, John was awarded The Meritorious Civilian Service Award, which is the second highest Department of the Navy honorary award. Born in Chicago, he moved to the Lake County area in 1985. John, and his wife Penny, currently reside in Lindenhurst. As John states, God did not bless them with children. John is an active member, and has served as Vice-President, for the American Society of Military Comptrollers. When asked about a personal accomplishment, John proudly responds he is a cancer survivor. In his time of leisure, John enjoys golf, bowling, bike riding, his Lionel Trains (O Gauge - Post War) and long walks on moonlight beaches with his life partner.

Chest Foundation Award for Dr. Ashok Fulambarker



Ashok Fulambarker, MD, FCCP, Chief, Pulmonary Disease Section received the 2004 Governors Community Service Award of THE CHEST FOUNDATION for his community service project "Child Abuse and HIV Prevention Through Promotion of Responsible Parenting". He received a grant of \$ 5,000 from "Love Humanity", a non-profit charitable organization. Dr. Fulambarker was officially recognized during the "Making a Difference Award Ceremony" at the American College of Chest Physicians annual meeting, October 23, 2004, Seattle, Washington

"PROUD TO CARE" Excellent Customer Service Stories

"Kudos to you at the McHenry Clinic. Today was my first day to experience a visit to your facility with regards to a health visit. It was a rewarding experience in as much I felt I was treated as an individual and not as one of a multitude as one would experience at North Chicago.

I personally want to thank Dr. Belo for taking the time to research my health history and being very personable. I have had the pleasure of meeting Trish and Gloria before, and today I met Celeste. I did pass by a smiling person that I might presume to be Ann (I saw her business card).

I did appreciate the attention I received. Thank You.

Hispanic Heritage Month

During National Hispanic Heritage Month, we recognize Hispanic Americans for helping to shape our national character and strengthen our communities. The warmth and vitality of the Hispanic culture are great gifts to America and are part of the unique fabric of our country. Hispanic Americans have enriched our Nation through contributions in many professions and fields, including education, law, government, business, science, sports, and the arts. Since our Nation's founding, Hispanic Americans have served bravely in the United States Armed Forces, earning more than 3 dozen Medals of Honor and numerous distinguished military decorations for their leadership, courage, and patriotism. Today, Hispanic Americans in our Armed Forces, National Guard, and Reserve units continue this proud legacy as they stand watch on the front lines of freedom. The hard work, values, and devotion to community of Hispanic Americans set a positive example for all Americans.

We join with all Americans in celebrating the heritage, culture, spirit, and contributions of Hispanic Americans from September 15 through October 15, during "National Hispanic Heritage Month."

VRU Job Fair



North Chicago VA Medical Center hosted the Sixth Annual Veterans Job Fair on Wednesday, September 29th. The Vocational Rehabilitation Unit at North Chicago VAMC; the Commanding Officer, Naval Station Great Lakes; and the Joint Transition Assistance Management Program (TAMP/VA) promoted this event to assist veterans, active duty and dependents who are in need of a job. This year's fair drew over 350 people from VRU, Fleet & Family Service Center (TAMP), Active Duty, Former Military, Reserves, and Retired Military. There were 23 employers from the area and two social service organizations who set up booths and took applications.

FMS Holds A Clothing Drive For VAMC North Chicago Homeless Veterans

Facilities Management Service (FMS) held a clothing drive for Homeless Veterans which commenced in July and continued until August with flyers and messages going out to all FMS staff as well as all employees of the medical center.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs states that the majority of homeless veterans are mostly males (2% are females). The VA estimates that more than 299,321 veterans are homeless on any given night. The vast majority are single, most come from poor, disadvantaged communities, 45% suffer from mental illness, and half struggle with substance abuse problems. Homeless Veterans have served in WWII, Korean War, Cold War, Vietnam, Grenada, Panama, Lebanon, or the military's anti-drug cultivation efforts in South America. Forty-seven percent of the homeless veterans served during the Vietnam Era.

These Veterans require a coordinated effort that provides secure housing and nutritious meals; essential health care, substance abuse aftercare and mental health counseling; and personal development and empowerment. Veterans also need job assessment, training and placement assistance. The most effective programs for homeless veterans are community based, non-profit, "veterans helping veterans" groups. FMS took on the challenge



Pictured from left: Bill Flood, Domiciliary; Mary Craigen, Domiciliary; Larry Erickson, FMS and Nancy Gallagher, Domiciliary.

to support our homeless Vets. When FMS contacted Bill Flood, Chief Domiciliary Service, to inquire about what is most needed, he stated "There is always a need for all types of clothing. The major need is for coats in the winter months. This kind of clothing drive has not been done here in a long time. It is vitally needed for our Homeless Veterans."

FMS took the challenge head on. Due to a large number of FMS employees who work in the outside environment, they have seen many Homeless Veterans with inadequate clothing for the harsh winter months and felt this clothing drive would be in their best interest. Expectations that were placed prior to the start of the clothing drive were met and far exceeded. Numerous coats, sweaters, shirts and pants were donated by FMS and medical center employees with open generosity. This is truly an example of North Chicago employees being "Proud To Care".

Hurricane Relief Volunteers

With less than a 24-hour notice, staff nurses Dinah Cousar, RN and Mary Jane Muir, RN were on their way to Florida as volunteers to assist with the aftermath of Hurricane Frances. Upon arrival in Florida, they were assigned to the Robard Arena shelter in Venice. Dinah and Mary Jane were not given duties of nurses, but duties associated with mental health counseling. Upon arrival at the shelter, the scene was total confusion.

There were approximately 145 "guests" seeking shelter at this one facility. People who came to the shelter were completely devastated. Many had left their homes with only the clothes



on their back; many did not have home-owners insurance and were left completely penniless. The shelter guests ranged in age from an 11 year old boy to an elderly women in her 80s. There was one gentleman confined to an electric wheelchair. His story revealed that he had been alone 2 ½ days in his apartment with no heat, food or electricity. He was wheelchair bound, and without electrical power, the wheelchair could not move. Dinah and Mary Jane heard many

tragic stories during the two-weeks at the shelter. Both employees revealed that this was truly a rewarding life-time experience that neither one will forget. Thank you Dinah and Mary Jane!



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POW/MIA Veterans Share Their Stories



Pictured from left is Don McCormick and Morrie Weiner

The P.O.W.- M.I.A. commemoration is set aside to honor the commitment and the sacrifices made by this nation's Ex-Prisoners of War and those who are still Missing in Action, as well as their families.



of heroism and sacrifice. The two speakers were Don McCormick who was an Army Ranger in Italy and Morrie Weiner who was a member of the Army 1ST Division "The Big Red One".

The NCVA held a program on September 21 that featured two former Prisoners of War from World War 2 sharing their experiences and stories

Dick Kutz of the VFW conducted a moving tribute by reciting the Remembrance Prayer. This ritual includes the "Missing Man Table" set for those still missing in action who could not be here with us.



The VFW from Highland Park presented the colors.

The Illinois Motorcycle Freedom Run



The founders of the Illinois Motorcycle Freedom Run decided to show their support for our troops. The decision was made to honor all our soldiers who interrupted their lives to fight in Iraq, "so we can have the freedoms our country has given us all these years and to keep those freedoms alive." They held a Freedom Run on June 22nd 2003. This 100-mile run began at the Oasis One-Sixty in Chicago Heights and traveled to the home of

the first fallen Illinois Soldier in St. Anne, IL. The proceeds of the benefit helped acquire a permanent memorial monument in support of "Operation Iraqi Freedom." in St. Anne. Now they are donating a similar plaque to all of the VAs in Illinois. It will be a place to express pride and a place to remember that freedom is not free. Pictured here are members of the Illinois Motorcycle Freedom Run donating the plaque to the North Chicago VA on September 11 in honor of the men and women of "Operation Iraqi Freedom". We will proudly display the plaque at the front entrance for all to see. We sincerely thank the founders of the Illinois Motorcycle Freedom Run for such a beautiful and meaningful donation.



Youth Donation

Youth from the United Protestant Church of Grayslake pictured with the air hockey table they donated to the veterans in the nursing home. Wow! What a great example of today's youth!

Re-Creation

On August 25, over 150 veterans were treated to the talents of Re-Creation. Boosting the spirits of veterans has been the job of the touring entertainment group "Re-Creation" for over 25 years.



Those who've attended these lively and professional performances at the VA Medical Centers know the wonderful effect the show has on the audience. The Bowlers of America through the BVL(Bowlers

Victory League) proudly present to America's Hospitalized Veterans the entertaining and uplifting performances of Re-Creation in all VA Medical Centers nationwide! Cited by the Freedoms Foundation as "America's Ambassadors to Hospitalized Veterans", Re-Creation entertainers brighten the days and touch the hearts of the men and women who have helped to preserve our freedom. Re-Creation presents young, talented performers who take audiences of all ages on a fabulous joyride through the great eras of American music! It was a magical program that transformed the stage into a wondrous showplace of unforgettable entertainment and our veterans truly enjoyed such a treat.